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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000465

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [DA](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: DENMARK DELIBERATING A CARROT VERSUS STICK
APPROACH TO UZBEKISTAN

Classified By: Political Officer Tim Buckley for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

This is a corrected copy of Tashkent 464. Paragraph 5 has been corrected.

¶1. (C) Summary: Visiting Danish First Secretary Ulrik Birk-Petersen met with the Ambassador and poloffs on April 16 to discuss the human rights situation in Uzbekistan. The Moscow-based Birk-Petersen was in town to gather current information ahead of the EU's April 28 sanctions debate. He opined that Germany, which supports lifting sanctions, and the Netherlands, which favors reinstatement, now represent the poles of the spectrum. Denmark, he said, is still undecided "and could go in either direction." Birk-Petersen had already met extensively with human rights activists and Uzbek officials. End summary.

¶2. (C) Birk-Petersen visited the Embassy on April 16 to seek our viewpoints on the human rights situation in Uzbekistan. Denmark does not have any diplomatic missions in the five former Soviet republics in Central Asia, and the Moscow-based Birk-Petersen is assigned to cover events in the region. He wanted to gather updated information in advance of the EU's upcoming decision on whether to reimpose its visa ban on Uzbek officials. On divisions within the EU, he noted that "all nations agree on the end goal" for what needs to happen in Uzbekistan, but he added that "there is a strategic question" of how to proceed. He said Germany, which supports the idea of lifting the visa ban, occupies one end of the spectrum, while the Netherlands, which wants to reinstate the visa ban, is on the opposite end. Concerning the latter, he told us the Dutch Foreign Minister has personally decided to take a hard line on Uzbekistan. (Note: We do not know how reliable his information is, but the French Ambassador to Uzbekistan told our Ambassador on April 17 that he had heard the Dutch would insist on resumption of sanctions unless the Uzbeks accredited Human Rights Watch's new Russian-citizen

researcher by April 28. End note.) Denmark, he said, is undecided "and could still go in either direction" after deliberating the merits of a "carrot versus stick" policy approach.

13. (C) Birk-Petersen noted that the Government of Uzbekistan has met some of the EU's benchmarks in the past six months, and Denmark is weighing the relative role the threat of resumed sanctions may have played in those actions. He noted that the Uzbeks clearly have a desire for improved relations with the EU, above and beyond human rights considerations, and that it is therefore difficult to know for sure what motivated the Uzbek actions. Keeping that in mind, deciding whether a resumption of sanctions is an effective strategy for pushing for continued movement on human rights can be a tough call. There is also a question, he noted, of whether Uzbekistan is willing to endure resumed isolation from the West. Referring to Uzbek comments about the repercussions on EU-Uzbek relations, should sanctions be resumed, he would not venture whether this was bluster.

14. (C) Denmark, which Birk-Petersen concedes has only limited bilateral interests in the region (he commented on the growing importance of oil and gas but said it seems the U.S. is more concerned about securing energy supplies to Europe than European countries), also appears to be taking a hard look at the political alternatives in Uzbekistan. In meeting with opposition figures, he was struck that one had three sons in jail for membership in Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT), which he suggested might mean that extremism is the likely alternative to the current Uzbek government. This is consistent with the message the Ministry of Foreign Affairs delivered to him during his official meetings, he said. MFA officials, he said, told him that only tight state control prevented

Uzbekistan from becoming "another Afghanistan."

15. (C) Poloffs told him that, while radical Islam certainly seemed at one point the only viable alternative to the Uzbek regime, it was not clear whether this was still so. Moreover, some in the Uzbek government seemed to have finally come to the same conclusion the USG had reached years ago about Uzbek policy: that hardline tactics ran the risk of empowering radical Islam. Birk-Petersen next asked poloffs whether Uzbeks have an appetite for liberal democracy. Poloffs explained that the question was somewhat skewed toward Western thinking. Uzbeks in general have a desire for a just and moral (and more prosperous) order, just as do most Westerners. However, their frame of reference in many cases is Islam, vice the ideals of liberal democracy. This is, of course, not so for all Uzbeks, but it is true for many. Poloffs explained that, to the extent western-style liberal democracy might be compatible in their eyes with their primary frame of reference, then an appetite no doubt existed. Beyond that, however, if one listed for Uzbeks the components of what we would normally consider to be liberal democracy, most Uzbeks would say they want each of those items.

Comment:

16. (C) Birk-Petersen struck us as extremely thoughtful. He did not seem to have a deep background in Central Asia, but he seemed most certainly to have digested the many considerations being bandied about within EU circles in the run-up to the April 28 decision. His comments, along with those in recent days from visiting officials from other EU countries not represented on the ground here, suggest that the terms of the debate are coming into sharp focus. The Dutch are apparently moving toward a hard line, while many others are digesting the arguments of the Germans and French (who have Missions here) but are keeping their options open.

NORLAND